

YAWN is a sporadic communiqué which seeks to provide a critical look at our culture in all its manifestations. **YAWN** welcomes responses from its readers, especially those of a critical nature. Be forewarned that anything sent to **YAWN** may be considered for inclusion in a future issue. Submissions are welcome and encouraged. Monetary donations are requested to help defray costs. Subscriptions to **YAWN** are available for \$10 (cash or unused stamps) for one year by first class mail. All content is archived at <http://yawn.detrutus.net/>.

OWVRAS90-93 (One Woman's Viewpoint Regarding Art Strike 1990-1993)

Conceding many of the points in **YAWN** (particularly those self-evidentiary), and most assuredly acknowledging the pompousness contained in the genetic code of artists, both past present and future, and being aware of the general relevance/irrelevance of all art (depending on who does it, who sees it, who critiques it, who throws up on it, etc.), OWVRAS90-93 would like to brashly put forth another possibility. (After all, this isn't 1990 yet, despite what many of us believe to the contrary). Therefore, there is **STILL TIME** to promote another way of going about this whole business of trying to determine the role of (if there is one) creativity in any society (much less today's), and whether or not creativity (i.e., art? [unsure]) has any potential for anything, such as ideas to save the world, or to promote art outside of history and thus if it solves anything, not to get the credit for so doing. Thus, it struck this woman (yes) that instead of Art Strike 1990-1993, there should be Forced Art Participation 1990-2001. Still basically undefined, FAP (even the acronym has a kind of strong sound [i.e., empowering] about it) would mean that people would not ditch their tvs, but instead have to write their own shows. On any given night, people showing up at a Royal Shakespeare (or other) production would have to bring substitute scripts and be prepared to play a role or two. And so it would go. People couldn't just go to a Stones concert, they would have to bring their own lyrics, melodies or whatever (some might be interested in playing the air guitar à la Mick Jagger), and participate in the event itself. This means that there would be no admission charges to anything, and thus capitalism's head (ugly to some, not to others), would be removed from the 'scene' (art, in this case). Voilà! Overnight the profit motive would be gone. Art would no longer be money. All artists, which would be everyone, would be sharing equally in the non-return so everyone, i.e., all artists, would be equally poor and suffering. And when famine was a true communal experience, art (through artists?) would perhaps save the day with some creative response. But we would have to stay on our guard, etc.

"The whole point is that life during the strike is going to be more creative, not less."



A Response to the Proposal for Forced Art Participation 1990-2001

At first glance, FAP 1990-2001 may seem like an appealing idea, inasmuch as it is an attempt to integrate the mental set "art" into the daily routine of all individuals. (Although it is difficult even at a first glance to overlook the authoritarian quasi-Fascist nature of the proposal itself.)

But it becomes very evident that the theoretical incoherence of FAP would, in effect, promote the opposite of its intentions. It would in fact be of benefit to the Art Strike in terms of the resentment it would generate toward art on the part of the general populace. The public would (and rightly so!) resent any hierarchically imposed activity, especially one which serves

no evident productive purpose. Resentment would lead to extreme distaste for "art" and its related activities. No doubt this would lead more people to reject art, and thus, consciously or un-, participate in the Art Strike 1990-1993.

But let us look deeper. Upon any more than the most casual reflection, it becomes obvious that FAP is based on an implicit and reactionary fear of liberation from the hierarchically imposed vision of the world as having neatly classifiable needs, along with the commodities to answer to those needs. In short, the proposer of FAP 1990-2001 is afraid of losing everything she doesn't have, and wouldn't deserve even if she did.

"Art" is a commodity which "answers" the "need" for escape on one hand, and promulgation of social status on the other. FAP suggests that, by making art a univer-

sal activity, the profit motive would be removed from it. But there would still be groups intent upon elevating themselves above others, claiming they alone produce the only "genuine" art. And their work would continue to be overvalued by those with excess money and the desire to invest it in something which will realize a profit and simultaneously enhance their status.

The whole point about the Art Strike 1990-1993 is that it is a means of intensifying the class struggle within in the cultural, economic, and political spheres all at once. If the Art Strike succeeds in demoralizing a small cross-section of the bourgeois class, even if it's only the artists, then it will have succeeded. FAP reads as a very sorry attempt to lend support to the hierarchically imposed ideal of the "value" of art. **YAWN** rejects this ill-considered proposal outright.

Hints From Heloise



DEAR HELOISE: I'm confused. Tell me, during the years of the Art Strike (1990–1993), what can I do with all the works of art I now have hanging around? Won't they be considered unsightly during this time? What will my friends think?

Confounded in Poughkeepsie

DEAR CONFOUNDED: You will never find the world to be a good place to live until you learn to think for yourself.

...

DEAR HELOISE: As an artist, I realize that my participation in the elite art world to date has essentially rendered my activity complicitous with the project of capitalism. But what will I do with my creative energies during the Years Without Art (1990–1993)?

Jaded in Jacksonville

DEAR JADED: You apparently still cling to the myth that the artist "must" create in order to "survive". Such archaic notions are harmlessly romantic at best, and at their worst, they are the mechanism by which cultural workers are encouraged not to question the motivations and end results of the larger project in which they are engaged.

Creative energies can be channeled into any activity you can imagine. Imagine it now: this will take you some distance toward disavowing art as an activity that is somehow "special", somehow "superior" to other human activities. It must be obvious even to you that art making is, in itself, an insufficient response to social crises. I suggest you get your act together and strive for a new level of activism within culture as a whole, instead of remaining insular, debilitated, and self-referential.

DEAR HELOISE: How does someone who constantly thinks in terms of art—such as myself—participate in an Art Strike (1990–1993) in light of the fact that they might consider an immense number of practical, everyday objects to be art? After all, is not a can opener a work of art? And the clothes that we wear? The food that we cook? Does creativity not enter into all human activities?

All-encompassing in Anchorage

DEAR ALL-ENCOMPASSING: Do not be mistaken: the Art Strike is directed against art in the Modernist and Post-modernist traditions, which brazenly proclaim that there will always be something to sell—even in the absence of thoughtful ideas or meaningful work. These artists cynically hold to the idea that the art which brings them the most money and fame is the best art.

Those objects which are the products of human invention need not be branded with the term "art" to be valued and respected as meaningful cultural achievements, especially when they do not participate in the subjugation of a class of individuals.

...

DEAR HELOISE: I'm with you! The Art Strike (1990–1993) truly is the only way to show the bastards of elitism what we're made of! Plus, I finally have the time to paint that garage! The wife's been after me for years to get it done!

Eager for Inaction in Albuquerque

HELOISE SAYS: Right you are, Eager! Simply making this challenge goes a long way towards taking apart the mental set "art" and undermining its position of hegemony within contemporary culture, since the success of art as a supposedly "superior form of knowledge" largely depends upon its status remaining unquestioned. We need to abolish the myths whereby the powers-that-be focus the image of their own moral superiority. Art is the armchair in which these fat cats sit for their own pleasure and self-assurance. Art has degenerated into a sniveling sycophancy. It is our duty to reject these models.

An Apology from OWVRAS90-93, the Proposer of Forced Art Participation 1990-2001

I am sorry. It has only just dawned on me how destructive the implementation of my half-baked proposal of the Forced Art Participation 1990–2001 might be. Simply forcing people to participate in the making of art does nothing to remove it from the domain of the commodity, as I once maintained. My reactionary proposal would only serve to create pockets of even more reactionary individuals who would find it necessary to create a new separation between themselves and those who are forced to make art by FAP. These cynical reactionaries would maintain that only they themselves were the "real" artists, and that "forced art" is not art. Since art is a sub-culture that often defines itself in opposition to culture, I now recognize that artists have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Therefore, far from abolishing elitism, FAP would greatly strengthen it, oppositionally and in direct proportion to what it opposes. These reactionary groups of individuals would no doubt spend their time writing mutually self-congratulatory texts and strutting about the street as if they were better than everyone else. In short, nothing would change. Down with FAP! Forward with Art Strike 1990–1993!

